

Hunting and Warfare

212 "Then dost thou at least know the signature of thy *sbeykh* and the seal of Amir Fuaz?"

Before his men, the Fid'an dared not admit that this too was beyond him, so I asked for the pouch Ali used to carry on his body, containing the letter along with other treasures.

Everybody listened respectfully to Ali's reading of the letter. He read judiciously—only what was pleasant and polite; all the rest he left out. The rascals hung on Ali's lips and drank in every word that came from them. When he had finished reading and had kissed the signature and the seal, the men pressed round him and inspected with awe the astounding document; and ignorant as they were of writing, they looked at it upside down!

- 685 The *Akid* was visibly uneasy, and for a while he and
626 the others put their heads together and, after much gesticulation and muttering, he turned to Ali and me and fired a cross-examination of silly questions at us. At last he seemed convinced that we had been wrongly treated, and he ordered his men to return our belongings to us. This naturally caused a small revolution, but the *Akid* knew how to make his influence felt, and after each of the men had in turn exhausted his protests against such a breach of the honour and the good customs of noble raiders, all our property was actually returned to us, with the exception only of my wrist watch, which still remained on the arm of the leader. Ali noticed it and, greatly daring, cried out: "Through thee the faith of thy *sbeykh* is blackened! Divest thyself of our property, if thou art our friend." The *Akid*

Honour among Thieves

meekly handed over the watch, which Ali put on his own wrist. "Let me take care of it for thee," he said to me, in his protective manner. He is actually "taking care" of my watch to this very day!

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Our Fid'an hosts numbered seventeen horsemen and eight camel-riders, who had come on the scene after the attack on us. A gang of typical desert outlaws.

At the evening meal they spread a large leather camel-saddle cover for a tablecloth. Previously the dough for our bread had been kneaded on it. At other times it served as manger and watering-trough for the horses and camels, for it could be suspended by leather loops, one at each of the four corners.

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The *Akid* poured sour camels' milk from a goat skin into a wooden basin and handed it round. The few *dhaluls* were lying close to us. The red campfire threw a glow of light over them and their long shadows melted into the blackness of the night. For a moment I imagined myself surrounded by strange monsters.

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When I closed my eyes and heard only the belching and grunting of my table-companions, I could scarcely distinguish them from the camels chewing the cud. And Ali was the noisiest feeder of them all!

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Next morning the Fid'ans proposed that they should join us with the idea of entering Ruala territory and lifting some camels. Nothing remained for Ali and myself but to make the best of these unwelcome proposals. We had to endure their company in the pious hope that somewhere we should fall in with the Ruala Bedouins.

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Two days later we camped at the well of Al-Hajal, 000

THE ARAB AT HOME

422 "Well," I persisted, "the matter does not seem to
425 trouble you a great deal."

"No indeed," with an even broader grin if that were possible. "It does not trouble me at all. Just as soon as I get out of here, I will go and steal somebody else's. Who knows? Perhaps I may have more than I had before."

425 The tribal fights that keep the country in a continual
518 state of turmoil are little more than glorified raids for the sake of plunder. They intensify the poverty of the community, for legitimate trade is handicapped, and this irregular exchange of goods cannot in the nature of the case benefit the whole society, however much it may temporarily enrich individuals. But life without the excitement of these raids seems to the desert nomad a tame and a stale thing, hardly worth living. On the other
422 hand, personal property, such as is kept in tents, is as sacredly individual as it is with us, and its theft is keenly
685 resented. The conception that every man's home is his
609 castle is one of the most fundamental ideas of the Arab, and when the crew of a gunboat many years ago attempted to search the inner quarters of a house in Dibai for firearms, the resulting indignation was so intense that foreigners found themselves unable to enter that district for
422 nearly ten years. The household belongings that the Bedouin keeps in his tent may be poor things but they are very much his own.

181 This life of the desert, with its poverty and hardships and its primitive economic conditions, has nevertheless so worked its charm on the Bedouin nomad that he longs for nothing else. The Bedouin with his intense individualism seems particularly adapted to the desert. He
000 loves its vast distances and its solitude. Anything less

Restitution of Stolen Camels

(4) If any case connected with stolen, hidden or wandering camels
425 arises between two tribes, and the two sides are unable to agree
619 on terms of settlement, then the matter will normally be referred
to the Ruler of the country or local Governor, as the case may
be. When the matter is finally settled, *khidmah* (or "service
fee") will be recovered from the party judged to be at fault.
This *khidmah* fee, which may run into a number of Rials, is
paid over to the Ruler's *fiddwis* or retainers, who have had the
labour of collecting evidence and finding witnesses.

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BADAWIN CUSTOM OF WASÁQAH (OR WASÁGA) BETWEEN BANI 'AM

Among Badawin who are in *Bani 'Am* relationship with one
another, if camels are stolen from one party by another the same
number of camels only as those stolen in the first place must be
returned, never more. And war may never arise between them from
such exchange of property. Restitution is normally arranged through
the mediation of relatives or the heads of clans.

The arrangement of restitution is known as *wasdaqah* (*wasdagna-
hum*—"we arranged restitution").

It would be quite a different matter if members of a strange tribe
or people, who were not *Bani 'Am*, stole the camels. Then the robbed
person (or persons) can rightfully take as many camels as he can lay
hands on from those who stole from him, and if no redress is obtained,
the case may result in war between the tribes.

• [655] Shaikh 'Ali al Khalifah al Subah of Kuwait told me on 8th October,
1938, that among *Bani 'Am* if a person for the sake of gain told tales
against his tribe, or reported that a member of his tribe had stolen
camels from another tribe, the penalty was that "he should be killed
by lance thrust"; this was a very ancient Badawin law.

ZAKÁT TAX

651 The tax known as *Zakát* has religious sanction, and payment is
one of the five duties incumbent on every true Muslim. The word
means "purification" and is applied to the legal alms that an indivi-
dual has to give to the religious tax-gatherers of the state each year;

Lost Property

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651 grazing. It sends men ahead and offers (a) *kwdhah* and (b) *dhabthah wa manihah*.

651 The former insures that the Shaikh of Kuwait will, if necessary, fight all comers in their defence; the latter is a promise that if Kuwait is attacked by outsiders, the shepherd tribes in his territory will faithfully serve and fight for him, whilst they are grazing in Kuwait territory. The payment of *dhabthah wa manihah* is a graceful way of saying "I am your servant to order, so long as I am in your country". Half a dozen young sheep is the usual amount offered. As often as not the gift is accepted and remitted by the big man—*Qabaltu wa rajd'at'u*, or, I have accepted your gift and hereby return it again to you. The present Shaikh of Kuwait has for some years ceased to demand either tax.

PROPERTY LOST IN THE DESERT

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425 Alois Musil, in his book, *The Manners and Customs of the Rwala*
685 *Bedouins*, gives a striking and accurate picture of what happens in the desert when a nomad loses part of his tent equipage, a camel or a mare when on the march. I cannot do better than recommend my readers to study what he has to say about it.

Under the desert code it is not, of course, considered a dishonest act to pick up and conceal an article which has been lost or dropped by another person. The finder is not required to go out of his way to seek the owner of the article; on the contrary, it is up to the owner to find his own lost property. This applies to all articles of camp gear, male and female attire, bags of food, strayed camels, horses, sheep, etc.

Should the finder really fear God (*khaf Allah*) he will probably tell his shaikh, or let it be known generally whilst he is on the march that he has found such and such an article, obviously dropped by someone, but he need not necessarily do so. Only when the owner publicly notifies his loss is the finder required to act. He must then and there hand back the goods if he is to escape the charge of being a thief. If the lost or strayed thing be a camel, mare or sheep, he will get a small reward in return. This is his *haq* or right.

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425 When Badawin are on the march with their families, and especially

The Finder Disgorges

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425 came the distant shout of "*Ta'al ta'al ya Muslim khud 'abbatak*".
I knew then that the owner had been lucky and got back his property.

Ibn Juma'a, the King's henchman—*Muthaiafchi*—who was sitting with me and my old friend Farhan al Rahama round one of the camp fires, amused me by remarking that it was surprising how often men recovered lost goods in this way, and that it proved how honest and God-fearing was the King's army.

425 So high is the Badawin code in such matters, that were the person
685 who had the lost property to conceal it and afterwards to be found out, he would get short shrift from his fellow tribesmen. They would revile and beat him publicly, and make things so unpleasant for him that he would find it profitable to leave his fellows for a season.

Thieving

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It may be mentioned in passing that a man who steals a slave of a prince or prominent Arab, whether in war or by underhand means, is never forgiven, and his death will be sought for and encompassed, if the original owner has to search for the culprit all his life and to the ends of the earth.

THEFT

Common thieving, whether from enemy or friend, is considered 'aib or a shameful thing among the true Badawin and is simply "not done".

The lifting of horses and camels from other Badawin with whom an ancient feud or enmity exists is not theft: it is a *ghazw*, or honourable raid. The appropriation of other people's property never takes place between persons or tribes who are on terms of friendship or alliance.

Given a strong central government such as in Sa'udi Arabia, and raiding becomes at once unfashionable, but if there is the least loss of control at the centre then out go the raiders, all intent on fun and *chessib* (loot).

Common thieving is punished by the loss of the right hand for the first offence, and so on for subsequent offences, and this punishment has the sanction of the Shari'ah Law behind it. The method is in force throughout Sa'udi Arabia to-day, in Yaman and in some of the neighbouring Arab states of the Persian Gulf.

Among the Northern Badawin of Arabia, if an accused man denies a theft, and there is no proof either way, the shaikh of a tribe or community sometimes orders the accused to stand the ordeal by fire. A sword or ramrod is brought and the end heated red hot in a fire and applied for a couple of seconds to the accused's tongue. If he is innocent he will not be hurt and will depart honourably acquitted and with head held high. If guilty his tongue will at once be badly burnt and the crime will be brought home to him.

I only once had a case of this brought to my notice. Shaikh Mahruth ibn Fahad Beg al Hadhal, of the Amarat ('Anizah), had a sword stolen from him when camped near Kerbela in 1922. As Political Officer Middle Euphrates I had a man from Musaiyib arrested on suspicion, the theft having been laid at his door by Shaikh Mahruth himself. No definite evidence was forthcoming and I was about to release the

Poisoning

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685 man when Shaikh Mahruth demanded that the ordeal by fire be
695 resorted to. I should have liked to agree, to see how it worked, but
couldn't very well accede to the request, so released the man, much
to Shaikh Mahruth's disgust.

POISONING

682 Despite the difficulty of proof, it seems certain that poison is used
278 pretty extensively in some parts of Arabia (especially the towns)
[369] to remove an inconvenient person, such as a private adversary or
possibly an unpleasant husband.

Rulers like the Al Rashid, Al Sa'adun and Al Sa'ud have certainly
used this method in the past, when out to get the better of their
political opponents, but I am glad to record that never has it been
suggested or hinted (even by his enemies) that the present great ruler
of Sa'udi Arabia, H.M. King 'Abdul 'Aziz al Sa'ud, has ever sunk to
such methods.

Probably the commonest poison is arsenic, or some preparation
of it. The reason of this is that its effects are rather like cholera, so no
questions are asked. Post-mortems are of course unknown. Arsenic,
moreover, is easily obtained in every town in Arabia, seeing that it
forms the chief ingredient in making preparations for treating camel
[369] mange, and in the bigger towns arsenic mixed with lime is a favourite
depilatory among better-class women.

The townspeople call poison *sim*, while among the Badawin it is
known as *sagwa*.

I have been told by some of my Badawin friends that a common
way of administering *sagwa* under the Al Rashid regime was by means
of the coffee-cup. The coffee man kept some arsenic powder made
into a paste on his thumb nail, and when he came to the person he
wanted to poison he lifted his thumb over the edge of the cup and
poured, as if by accident, some coffee over his thumb, and the poison
went into the cup. The one to be poisoned drank it, later went sick,
showed every symptom of cholera and then died.

An old 'Ajman shaikh told me (10th April, 1935) that when Ibn
Rashid tried to poison Shaikh Abdur Rahman al Sa'ud (the father of
the present King) and his brother when they were his hostages in